

Violin Spiders

Several native and exotic species of violin spiders found in the United States are considered to be an actual or potential public health danger. These spiders are found in homes among boxes, papers and bedding or in seldom-worn clothing or shoes. Outside they live under rocks, lumber or debris. The recessive behavior of these spiders limits their actual contact with humans. However, these spiders will bite as a defensive gesture or when disturbed or frightened.

The bite can cause an immediate or a delayed pain reaction (2-3 hours), depending on the sensitivity of the victim and the quantity of venom injected. The bite leaves a cone-shaped sore that rapidly gains a white crater at the center and is surrounded by swollen, red tissue that enlarges continuously. The white tip turns black as tissue dies (*necrotic arachnidism*), but there is no pain. The sore requires **immediate medical attention** because the spider's venom will continue to destroy tissue. The sore may take months to heal. Death and/or amputation of limbs can result.

Violin spiders are characterized by having six eyes arranged in pairs in a semicircle in front of a faint, violin-shaped mark on the midsection. The brown recluse, southwestern brown spider and the South American brown spider differ from each other in body size and color. **The venom from all these spiders results in the same tissue damage.**

Personal Protection

- Check seldom-worn clothing or shoes before wearing, especially if clothing has been in storage
- Inspect bed and bedding before sleeping
- Wear gloves and tap or thump on storage boxes before moving

Prevention and Control

- Insect-proof houses with window and door screens
- Use yellow-colored light bulbs outdoors
- Remove animal manure from premises
- Trim shrubbery away from windows
- Spray spider pesticides around outside utility boxes and inside under stairs, furniture and other possible hiding places
- Destroy spiders and webs with a stick or broom



Brown Recluse Spider

Loxosceles reclusa

The female spider is 1/2" in body length to 1 1/4" with the legs extended. It is yellowish-brown in color and is found in the southeast to the midwest.

Southwestern Brown Spider

Loxosceles deserta

This spider is sandy or orangishyellow with a light brownishgray abdomen. It has a smaller body than the brown recluse, but longer legs. The southwestern brown spider is indigenous to California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Texas. In California, it is found in the southern parts of the state, and has been implicated in several spider-bite cases.

South American Brown Spider

Loxosceles laeta

This is the largest and darkest of all the violin spiders found in this area. A native of South America, this spider has been found in Massachusetts and California.

Whip Scorpion (Vinegaroon)

Mastigoproctus giganteus

The whip scorpion or vinegaroon is also known as vinagron, grampus and mule killer. This arachnid is harmless to humans and does not sting or bite. It is active at night and feeds on insects and other arthropods. During the day, it hides beneath rocks, logs and leaves.



The whip scorpion has strong pedipalps (*pincer-like claws*) which are used for seizing and tearing apart its prey. In this animal, the first pair of long legs is used as feelers, with the other three pairs of legs used for locomotion. The cephalothorax (*head and thorax*), covered by a single piece of carapace (*shell*), has eight eyes. The vinegaroon bears a flagellum (*slender whip*) at the tip of the abdomen, hence, giving it the name whip scorpion.

This animal has two glands at the base of the tail. When irritated or disturbed, the glands discharge a vinegar-scented fluid. Due to this odorous substance, this animal was given the name vinagron (*from the Spanish vinagre*) which was later changed to vinegaroon. The glandular fluid may cause blistering if the vinegaroon is crushed onto human skin.



Wind Scorpion/ Sun Spider

Solpugid

This scorpion gets its name from living in deserts or dry areas and from running “like the wind.” It is yellowish or brown and can grow to two inches long. It does not have venom glands and it is harmless to humans, but it can bite with its long pincer-like jaws. The only aftereffect may be from the bite becoming infected. It is usually nocturnal, but can be active during the day.



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